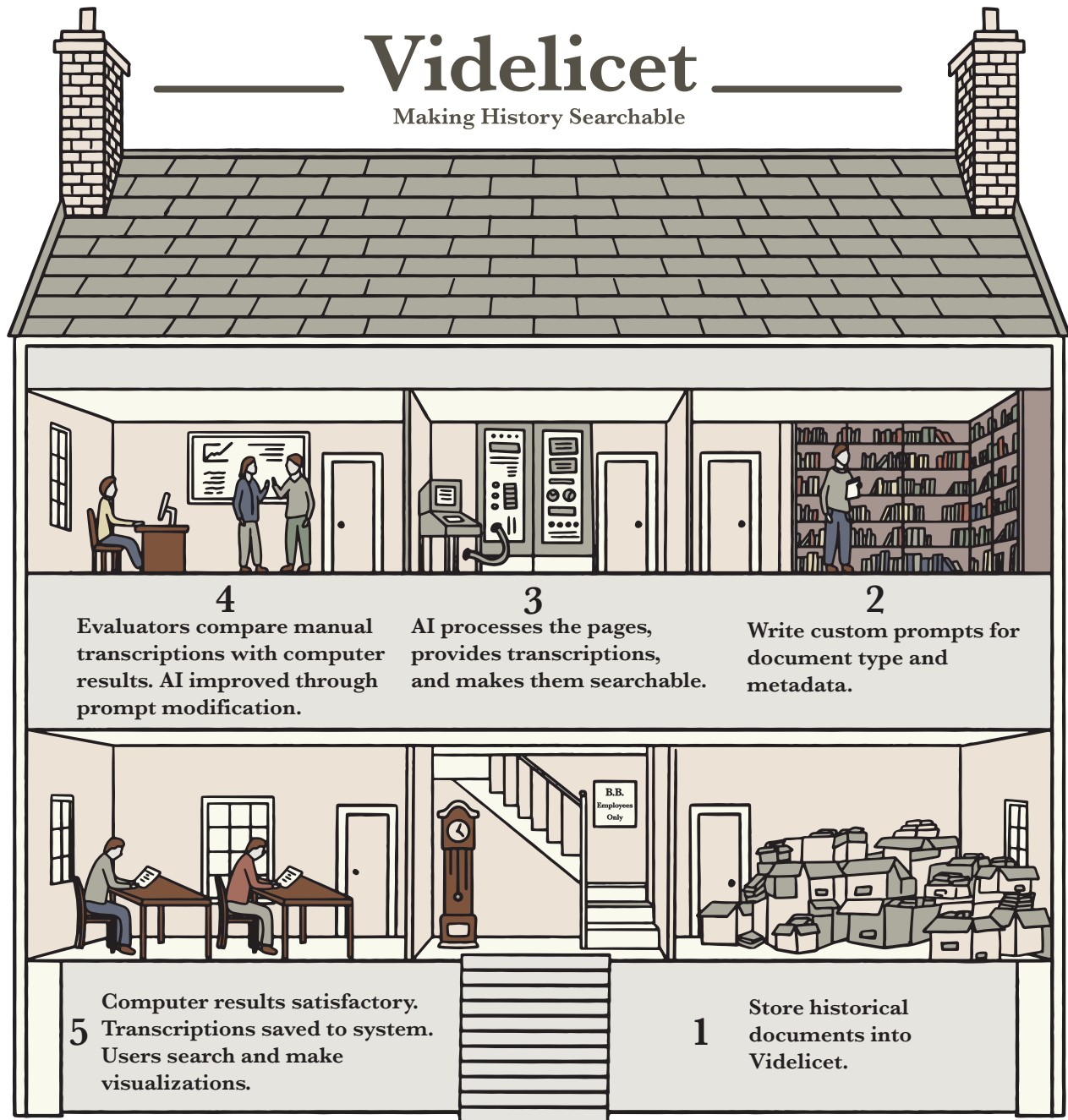




Videlicet™ is an Artificial Intelligence-assisted historical archive, transcription tool, data visualizer, and search system. Its capabilities help researchers build connections, narratives, and track change over time.

Notable People from the Ledger

Edwin Cudden Davis (1780-1854)

In the early 19th century, local planter Edwin Cudden Davis opened a store in the growing town of Orange Courthouse. By 1818, after James and Dolley Madison retired to Montpelier, his store was in full operation. Davis was a man of standing, witnessing many local court records and legal documents. His trade's range was extensive for the Early American Republic. Beyond Orange, his clientele stretched to Greene and Madison counties and the town of Gordonsville. Davis's ledger book, a copy of which still exists today, included purchases from local elites. The Madisons, including James and his mother Nelly, frequented Davis's shop.

Nelly Conway Madison (1731-1829)

Nelly Conway Madison was born in 1731 to a wealthy family of planters and tobacco merchants in Tidewater, Virginia. She married James Madison, Sr. at the age of eighteen. James, Sr. was the largest landowner in Orange County. For him, the match was advantageous. Nelly gave birth twelve times. Seven lived to adulthood. Her oldest son, James Madison Jr., was the fourth president of the United States. Although described as unhealthy, Nelly lived until 1829 and died at the age of 98. She outlived her husband by 28 years. During her widowhood, she shared a house with James, Jr. and his wife Dolley at Montpelier. They visited her during their trips back to the estate. Upon their retirement, they visited her every day. Nelly led a separate life, cared for by her own staff. She took her meals and organized her days in the 18th century manner. She placed her own shopping orders with Cudden Davis, grew her own vegetables, and, presumably, raised personal livestock.

After her husband's death, Nelly owned no land. However, she held nineteen individuals in slavery. Eight worked as domestic servants or in her garden. During her long widowhood, Nelly would have seen and talked these men and women every day. In the first draft of her will, she allowed these individuals to choose their new enslavers upon her death. This degree of agency was unusual. Through a series of codicils, Nelly gave the remaining eleven enslaved peoples, agricultural laborers, the same ability to choose their future enslaver.